

Application No. 10/602,872

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (currently amended) Apparatus for coupling an airbag cover having a peripheral sidewall with a an airbag housing member having a peripheral sidewall, comprising an array of hooks and retainers at least one hook and at least one retainer each formed in one piece with the peripheral sidewall of the airbag housing member with the hooks being in staggered relation to the retainers, the hook and the retainer hooks and retainers oriented toward each other and being configured to capture a part of the airbag cover between them, to couple the airbag cover with the airbag housing member, wherein the airbag cover is formed of elastically deformable material and the peripheral sidewall of the airbag cover has an array of openings therein, each opening configured to fit over a hook when the airbag cover is captured between the hook and the retainer, the airbag cover is configured to be tightly fit over the housing member as the airbag cover is being coupled with the housing member, and the housing member is formed of relatively rigid material such the airbag cover can deform elastically as it is being coupled with the housing member and the airbag cover is being captured between the hook and the retainer, the hooks have outer surfaces that define ramp portions over which the airbag cover can ride as the airbag cover is being coupled with the housing member, so that as the airbag cover is being coupled with the housing member (i) the cover will deform elastically as it rides over the ramp portions of the hooks, (ii) the leading edge of the cover will engage the retainers and be compressed until the openings in the cover receive respective hooks of the housing and (iii) when the cover is released the cover can react against the retainers, and expand between the hooks and retainers to capture the cover between the hooks and the retainers.

2. (canceled)

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3. (canceled).

4. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim [3] 1, wherein the housing member and the cover when assembled define an airbag cavity for housing an airbag, the housing member has a plurality of hooks and a plurality of retainers formed in one piece therewith, and the cover includes a plurality of openings each of which is configured to fit over a respective hook when the cover is coupled with the housing member.

5. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim [4] 1, wherein the housing member includes a side wall, and each retainer includes (i) a stop portion that extends away from the sidewall of the housing member and (ii) a lip at the distal end of the stop portion, the stop portions of the retainers being configured to engage a leading edge of the airbag cover when the cover is coupled with the housing member, and the lips of the retainers being oriented toward the hooks ~~so that the retainers co-operate with the hooks to capture the part of the cover between the hooks and the retainers when the cover is coupled with the housing member~~.

6. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim 5, wherein the hooks have outer surfaces that define ramps over which the cover airbag cover can ride as the airbag cover is being coupled with the housing member, so that as the airbag cover is being coupled with the housing member (a) the airbag cover can stretch elastically and ride over the hooks and (b) portions of a the leading edge of the airbag cover can engage the stops stop portions of the retainers and enable the airbag cover to become captured between the hooks and the retainers when the hooks extend through the openings in the cover.

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7. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim [6] 1, wherein the airbag housing member, the hooks and the retainers are formed in one piece as a stamped metal member.

8. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim [7] 1, wherein each of the hooks includes a central portion and a transverse portion at the a leading end of the central portion, the central portion of each hook defining a the ramp portion of the hook.

9. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim [7] 1, wherein each of the hooks includes a hook portion and a separate ramp portion spaced apart from the hook portion.

10. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim [6] 1, wherein the airbag housing member, the hooks and the retainers are formed in one piece as a molded member.

11. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim [6] 1, wherein the airbag housing member, the hooks and the retainers are formed in one piece as a cast metal member.

12. (canceled)

13. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim [12] 1, wherein the leading edge of the cover has a periodic wave profile, with a plurality of spaced crests and troughs disposed between the spaced crests, and wherein the crests are staggered in relation to the openings in the cover; such that the crests are aligned with the retainers when the openings are fit over the hooks of the housing member.

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14. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim [4] 1, wherein the hooks, the retainers, the openings and the cover are configured to ~~(a) enable the cover to be tightly fit over the housing member, (b) capture the cover between the hooks and the retainers, (c) prevent over travel of the cover during coupling of the cover with the housing member, and (d) retain the cover coupled to the housing member during deployment of an airbag from the cavity.~~

15. (currently amended) A method of assembling an airbag cover with an airbag housing, comprising the steps of:

(a) providing a housing with a plurality of hooks and a plurality of retainers formed in one piece therewith, the plurality of hooks being oriented toward the plurality of retainers;

(b) providing an airbag cover configured to be tightly fit over the housing ~~member~~ to couple the airbag cover with the housing; ~~(c)~~, the cover being formed of elastically deformable material, the housing being formed of relatively rigid material and the hooks defining ramps which are oriented toward the retainers, so that portions of the cover can ride over the ramps of the housing and deform elastically as the cover is being fit over the housing, the cover having openings, each of which is configured to receive a respective hook as the cover is being fit over the housing;

~~(d) (c) fitting the cover tightly over the housing until a leading edge of the cover engages the retainers, and the openings in the cover receive respective hooks of the housing, and then releasing the ~~a~~ fitting of the cover over the housing, whereby as the cover is being tightly fit over the housing; wherein~~

(i) the cover will deform elastically as it rides over the ramps of the housing, (ii) the leading edge of the cover will engage the retainers and be compressed until the openings in the cover receive respective hooks of the housing and (iii) when the cover is released the cover can react against the retainers, and expand between the hooks and retainers to capture the cover between the hooks and the retainers.

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16. (currently amended) The method of claim 15, wherein the cover has a leading edge leading edge has having spaced crests and troughs disposed between the crests, and wherein the hooks and retainers of the housing are staggered in relation to each other, and the openings and crests of the cover are staggered in relation to each other and are oriented such that the crests of the cover are aligned with the retainers of the housing when the openings in the cover are fit over the hooks of the housing.

17. (currently amended) An airbag module comprising an airbag cover and housing member that form a cavity for an airbag, and characterized in that the housing member comprises a plurality of hooks and a plurality of retainers formed in one piece with the housing member, the hooks and retainers being oriented toward each other and being configured to capture a part of the airbag cover between them, to couple the airbag cover with the housing member, the hooks having outer surfaces that define ramp portions over which the airbag cover can ride as the airbag cover is being coupled with the housing member, and the hooks are staggered in relation to the retainers, wherein the housing member is relatively rigid and the airbag cover is elastically deformable and includes a plurality of openings, each of which is fit over a respective hook when the cover is coupled with the housing member, each retainer including (i) a stop portion that extends away from the housing member and (ii) a lip at the distal end of the stop portion, the stop portions of the retainers being configured to engage a leading edge of the airbag cover and the lips of the retainers being oriented toward the hooks so that the retainers co-operate with the hooks to capture the part of the cover between the hooks and the retainers when the cover is coupled with the housing member, and the leading edge of the cover has a periodic wave profile comprising a series of spaced crests and troughs disposed between the crests, and wherein the openings and the crests are in staggered relation to each other such that the crests of the cover are aligned with the retainers of the housing member when the openings in the cover are fit over the hooks of the housing member.

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18. (canceled)

19. (canceled)

20. (canceled)

21. (currently amended) The airbag module of claim [20] 17, wherein the housing member, the hooks and the retainers are formed in one piece as a stamped metal member.

22. (currently amended) The airbag module of claim 21, wherein each of the ~~hooks~~ hooks includes a central portion and a pair of transverse portions at the leading end of the central portion, the central portion of each hook defining a the ramp portion of the hook.

23. (currently amended) The airbag module of claim 21, wherein each of the hooks includes a hook portion and a separate ramp portion spaced apart from the hook portion.

24. (currently amended) The airbag module of claim [20] 17, wherein the housing member, the hooks and the retainers are formed in one piece as a molded member.

25. (currently amended) The airbag module of claim [20] 17, wherein the airbag housing member, the hooks and the retainers are formed in one piece as a cast metal member.